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STATINTL

Fulbright Meets The Press—& Vice Versa

IT POSSIBLY was just the one show, but NBC's "Meet the Press"—returned to on Sunday after a sabbatical of some duration—appears to have lost a little of its bear-baiting character, even as its panel of questioners has become more seriously motivated and more generally plausible all around. On this occasion, at least, nobody wore a funny hat.

Yet it seems to us that the purpose of this and other Sunday Q. and A. programs of the genre still is to compete for Monday morning headline space with whatever acts of God may or may not be visited upon us over a particular late week end. The purpose of programs of this sort is, of course, to attract 120,000,000 viewers or listeners at the time of broadcast, but if anybody ever seriously thought that one ever would or ever could, we might get more programs of this sort at some time other than Sunday morning or afternoon. (Quite incidentally, the minority of network viewers who used to complain about being herded into the Sunday cultural "ghetto" have had progressively less to grouse about: Even the ghetto is constricting apace.)

Be all this as it may, people keep on getting invited to appear on programs like "Meet the Press" for a variety of reasons—most of them having to do with the subject's innate capacity for eliciting some kind of news play merely by remarking on the weather. And people go on accepting such invitations for a variety of purposes. Some to acquiesce almost zestfully in the creation of new headlines; others in the hope—faint at best—of putting some old headlines in new perspective. Needless to say, Senator J. W. Fulbright's Sunday appearance on "Meet the Press" fits into the second category; "needless to say" because so has his purpose on this and every other kind of "information" program always been to inform, rather than to astound or to titillate.

There was almost nothing said by Senator Fulbright on Sunday that he had not said on some earlier occasion or that might not have been logically in-

ferred from the burden of what he had said on the subject on a number of earlier occasions.

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YES, he felt that the evolving of a more forward-looking American foreign policy had tended to be stultified by the war in Vietnam. Although he felt that no one could really be "satisfied" with the Vietnamese war ("a dismal business"), he had supported the broad outline of administration policy there, principally because nobody had come up with a fully acceptable alternative. Almost parenthetically, he did not, however, think that last spring's four-day moratorium on bombings across the North Vietnamese frontier had been long enough to provide any maneuvering room for third-party efforts to bring the Communists to the negotiating table.

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SENATOR FULBRIGHT was much more specific on the subject of the Dominican Republic, although he went out of his way, again, to stress that the conclusions he had reached after a full-scale investigation by the staff of his Senate Foreign Relations Committee were, by their very nature, the product of "hindsight"; he had not, in any case, questioned the responses President Johnson had had to make there without benefit of hindsight so much as the quality of the information and intelligence upon which the President's snap responses had been based.

Throughout the program, the Foreign Relations chairman was obliged to fight a determined rear-guard action against having words—particularly adjectives—put into his mouth, as in questions concerning the degree of control being exercised over the nation's foreign policy by such agencies as the Department of Defense and the CIA. Again, the nature of the senator's response here was nothing, really, that President Eisenhower had not talked about in his celebrated "Farewell Message" of 1961, when he warned against the threat of our liberties implicit in the continued growth of an interlocking "military-industrial complex." With the benefit of five years' hindsight added, of course; although, as we recall, Fulbright, as usual, was talking about it first.